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UPON

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THE WHOLE EMBODYING A CLEAR AND CONCISE
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OF

BANJO PLAYING

Compiled and Arranged

BY

B. SHELDON GREEN.

(AUTHOR OF TECHNICAL STUDIES IN BANJO PLECTRING, ETC.)

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"SOSTENUTO"

HOW TO ACQUIRE IT RAPIDLY.

BY

B. SHELDON GREEN.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

In submitting the following exercises and studies to Banjo *enthusiasts*, I feel no apology is necessary.

Sostenuto, a most beautiful style of playing, and by no means as difficult of acquirement as we have been led to believe, raises the Banjo to the standard of a *perfect Solo instrument*, *i.e.*, one on which melody and accompaniment is playable simultaneously, and for this reason alone should commend itself to lovers of the instrument.

Many able exponents of both the picking and plectrum styles of playing have never been able to get beyond the very elementary stages.

They have practised the method of twiddling a perfectly rigid first finger from the big knuckle; or the other (quite as absurd) method of placing the third finger (sometimes third and fourth) on the vellum.

Another stumbling block has been the playing of *as many finger strokes as possible to each pick of the thumb.*

It is very much easier to bring the thumb down on one particular stroke of the finger (*viz:*, the 1st. 5th. 9th. etc., or the 1st. 9th. 17th. etc.) than to insert it indiscriminately.

Practise the exercises very slowly at first, and gradually increase the speed till a *continuous*, *even* tremolo is acquired.

SYDNEY. N. S. W. *B. SHELDON GREEN.*

SOSTENUTO

HOW TO ACQUIRE IT RAPIDLY.

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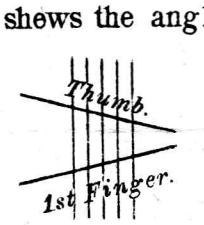
METHOD.

1. The fourth finger is retained on the vellum as in the picking style.

2. The hand (in the direction of the thumb) is tilted a good deal towards the vellum, in order to permit the first finger to be drawn well back towards the fourth. The thumb-side edge of the finger tips *only* comes into contact with the strings.

3. Bend the finger at both the first and second joints. A bent finger is stronger than a straight one; and a more rapid and shorter stroke is easily acquired.

4. The accompanying illustration shews the angles at which the thumb and first finger work.



Observation:- This position of the hand will answer for all exercises, except those in which the second and third, or third and fourth strings are sustained.

5. Hold the Banjo in the usual manner.

6. The wrist is raised a trifle more than in the picking style.

7. In chord work a certain amount of forearm action eases the strain on the finger, and enables one to play lengthy solos without growing tired.

N.B. I have taught pupils to play "The Miserère" (as included in these Studies) within twelve weeks. Of course personal instruction is much more beneficial than reams of written contentions, and it is only to be expected that readers of these pages may not progress quite so rapidly.

In any event, six months practice (fifteen or twenty minutes morning and evening) should prove quite sufficient to enable any average Banjoist to master Sostenuto.

The Studies are all melodious, and will repay the pupil for time spent on working them out.

8. It will be necessary to train the fingers of the left hand to shift very easily from one position to another so as to keep the tremolo continuous.

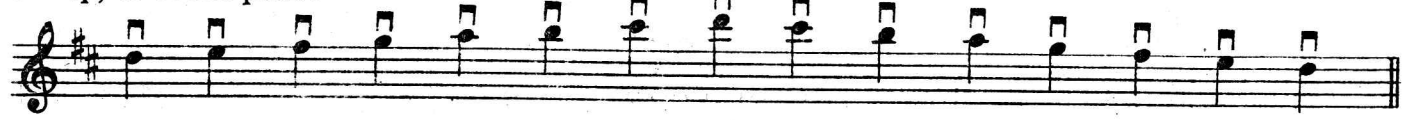
A broken, choppy tremolo (such as would be occasioned by slovenly left-hand work) is horrible in effect.

9. It is sometimes more convenient to play two sets of triplets instead of four even notes to each thumb pick, *viz:*, six quavers instead of four, etc.

EXCERCISES.

Signs.
⊓ = down, or nail stroke.
V = up, or flesh pick.

I.



II.

III.

IV.

V.

VI.

VII.

VIII.

IX. to **XII.** **Play Nos. V, VI, VII & VIII.** thus V⊓V⊓V⊓V⊓ **etc.**

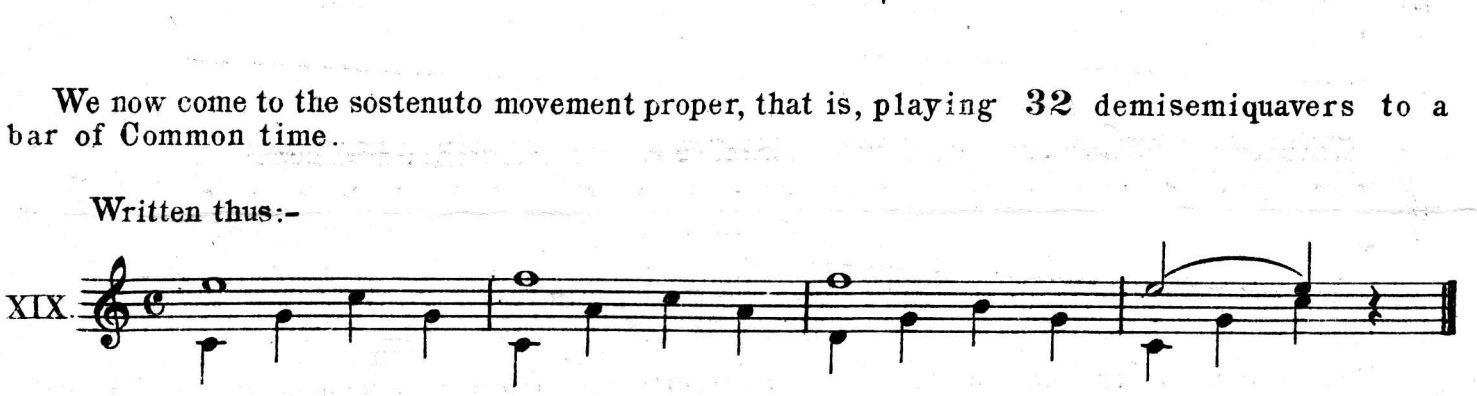
XIII.

XIV. to **XVI.** Play similarly on the 2nd 3rd & 4th Strings.

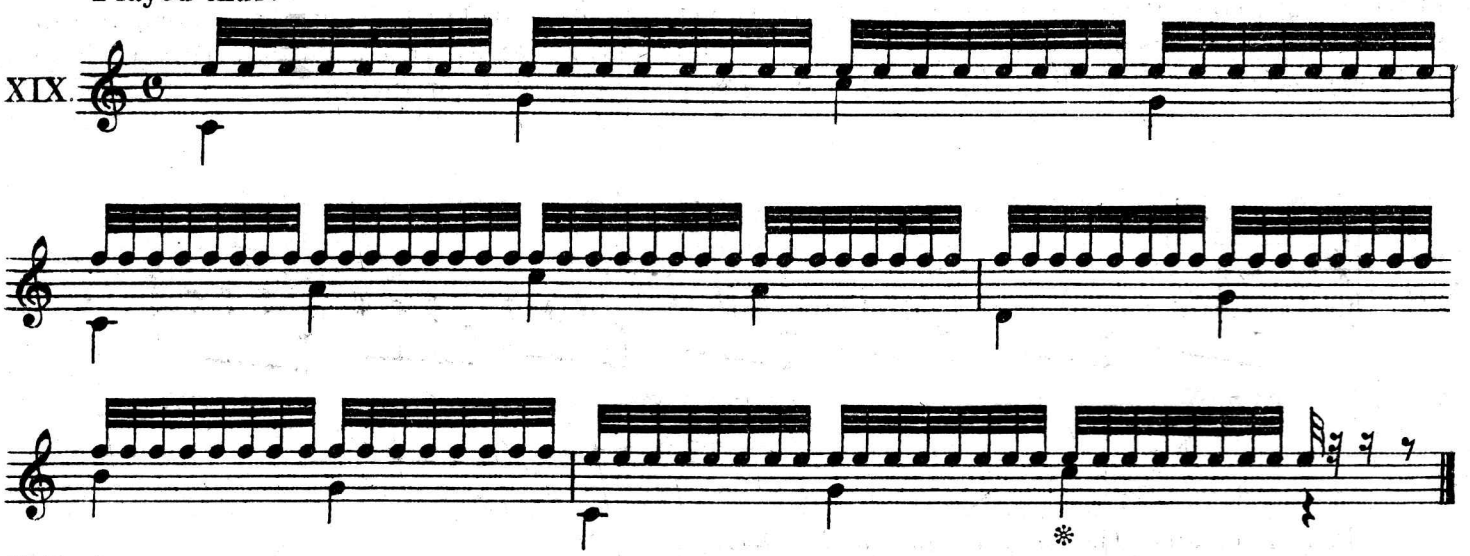
The following exercises introduce the accompaniment which, in every instance, is played by the thumb. In the earlier stages of practice there is a tendency for the 1st. finger to stop as soon as the thumb comes into use, and later, there is a noticeable break in the tremolo as each accom-panying note is struck. These difficulties soon fade away under constance practice, and the thumb and finger work independantly without any trouble.

We now come to the sostenuto movement proper, that is, playing **32** demisemiquavers to a bar of Common time.

Written thus:-



Played thus:-



N.B. All alternate thus:- V⊓V⊓V⊓V⊓ etc.

Observation:- Note that there are *nine E's* on the final "C" pick of the thumb (marked ✻) This follows from the fact of of there being a crotchet **E** tied to the previous **E**. Eight strokes are played for the crotchet and one more for the rest. This rule (viz:- one for a rest) is absolute.

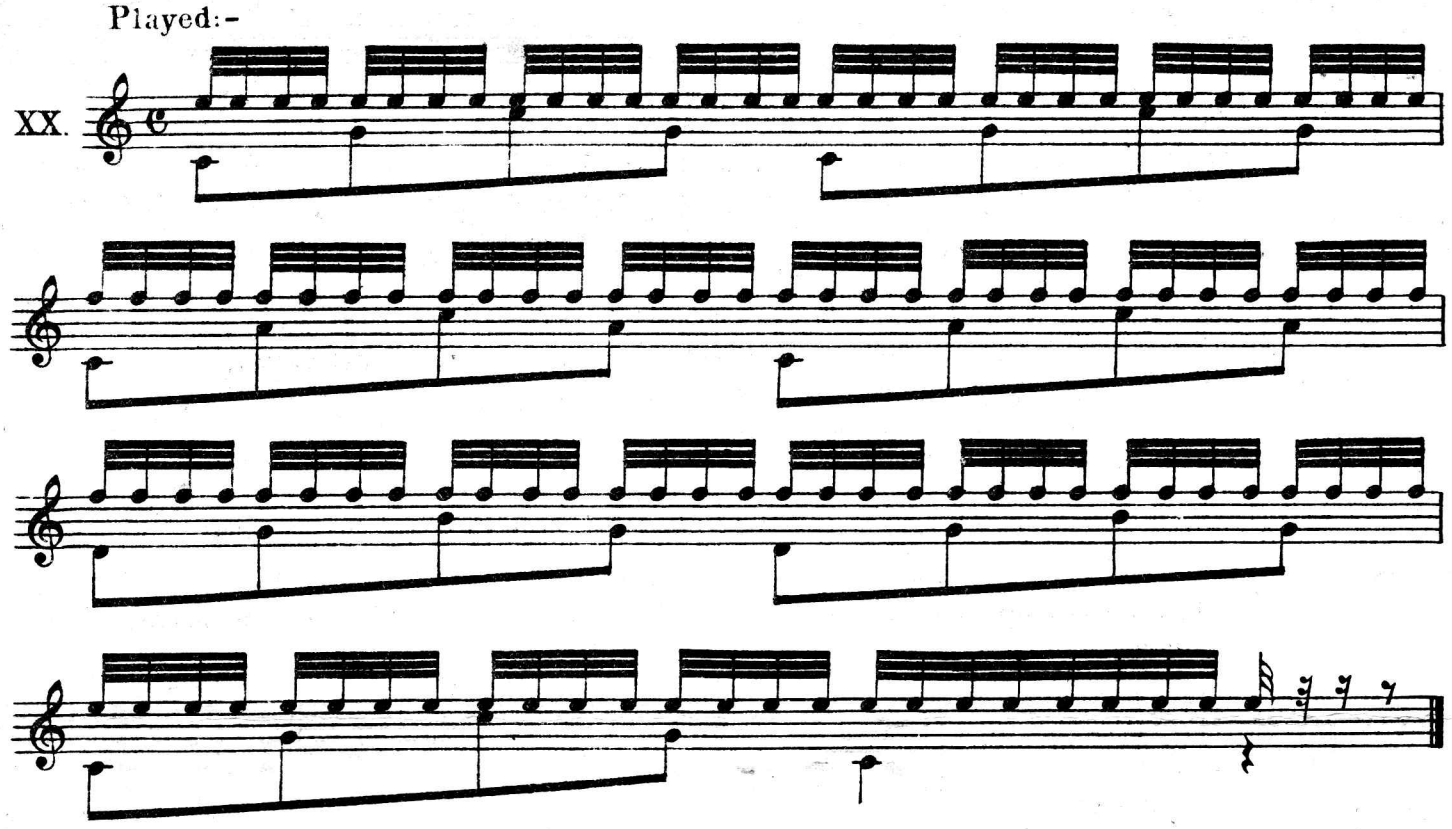
The following is the same movement in varied tempo.

Written:-

XX.

Played:-

XX.



We now come to the more difficult and more effective two-note accompaniment. The difficulty in this exercise will be experienced in getting the thumb to glide *softly* over the two strings. At first it seems to stick at the third string. Be careful to keep the accompaniment softer than the sustained melody. If the thumb bangs away like a quick-firer it alone is heard a little distance off, and the melody is completely drowned.

Play in exactly the same manner as No. XX.

XXI.

Play in exactly the same manner as No. XIX.

XXII.

The following exercises are more difficult than the preceding, and will demand a greater amount of attention. The construction of the hand is such as does not take kindly to this sort, and it has, as it were, to be coaxed into working order by assiduous practice.

XXIII.

Observation: A certain amount of difficulty will also be experienced in striking the 2nd. string with the thumb *while sustaining it with the 1st. finger*. If the 1st finger is bent well backwards towards the 4th. and the thumb well advanced, the movement is rendered a good deal easier.

The next exercise illustrates the picking of a two-note accompaniment while sustaining two strings. It is pretty and effective, yet not too difficult.

XXIV.

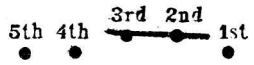
The next two exercises illustrate chord-sostenuto on three and four strings respectiyely.

XXV.

XXVI.

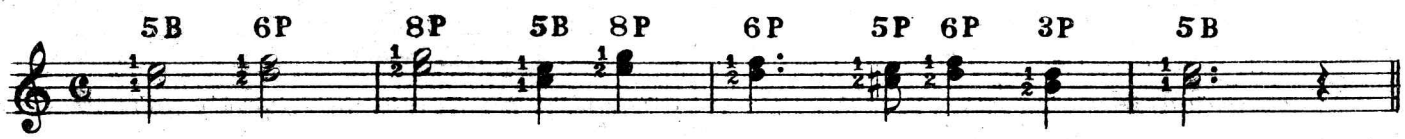
We now come to a form of Sostenuto which is rarely (if ever) heard anywhere, (viz:- sustaining on two or more of the inside strings.)

When sustaining on the 2nd. & 3rd. strings, the 4th. finger must be pressed down hard against the 1st string. This, besides deadening the string also serves to depress it below the others (vide illustration.) The thumb must rest *on* the 4th. string.



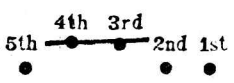
N.B. The 4th. finger is *not* lifted from the vellum for the purpose. It is just drawn right up against the 1st. string and a downward pressure exerted.

XXVII.



When sustaining on the 3rd. & 4th. strings, it is only necessary to press the 5th. string down towards the vellum with the thumb (if the melody be on the 3rd. string)

When the melody note is on the 4th. string, it will be found helpful to place the 4th. finger *on* the 1st. & 2nd. strings, press the 5th. further down with the thumb, and strike at a more acute angle vide illustration.



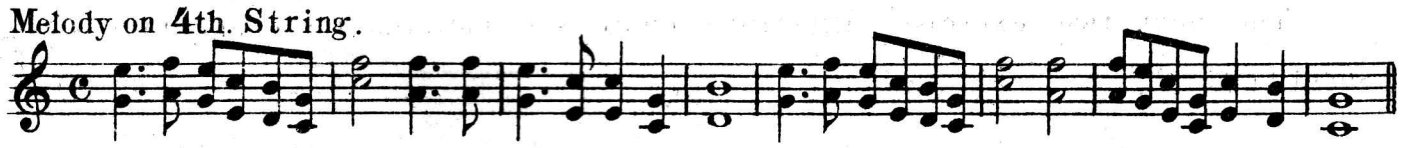
The object is of course to make the melody note stand out above the accompanying one.

Melody on 3rd. String.

XXVIII.

Melody on 4th. String.

XXIX.



The followinp exercise is a variation of No. XXVIII. Here the accompanying note is played by the thumb while the 1st. finger sustains the melody.

XXX.

STUDIES.

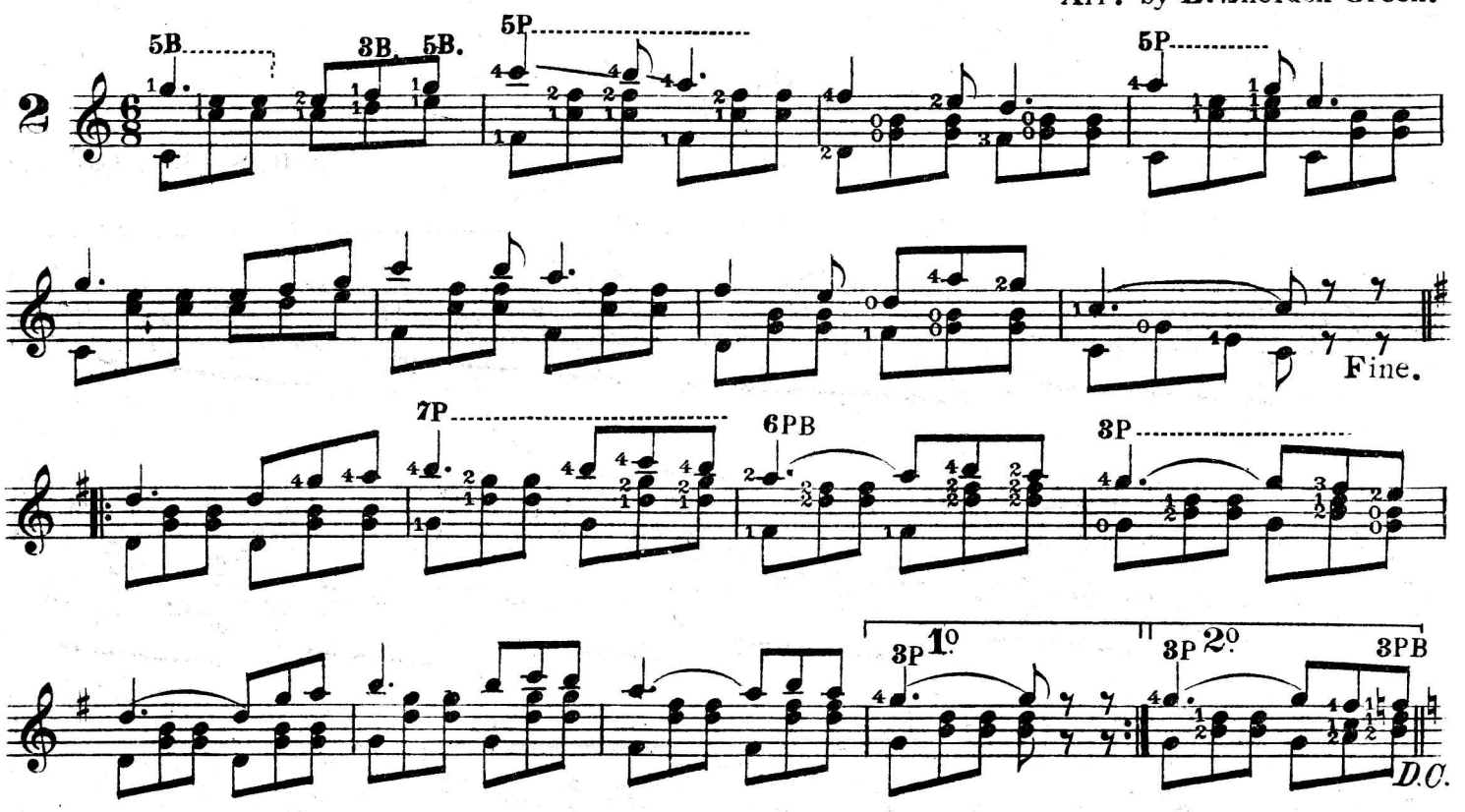
"AIR."

by B. Sheldon Green.

Observation: **This Study illustrates the simple melody, with single-note accompaniment style.**

"SILVERY WAVES."

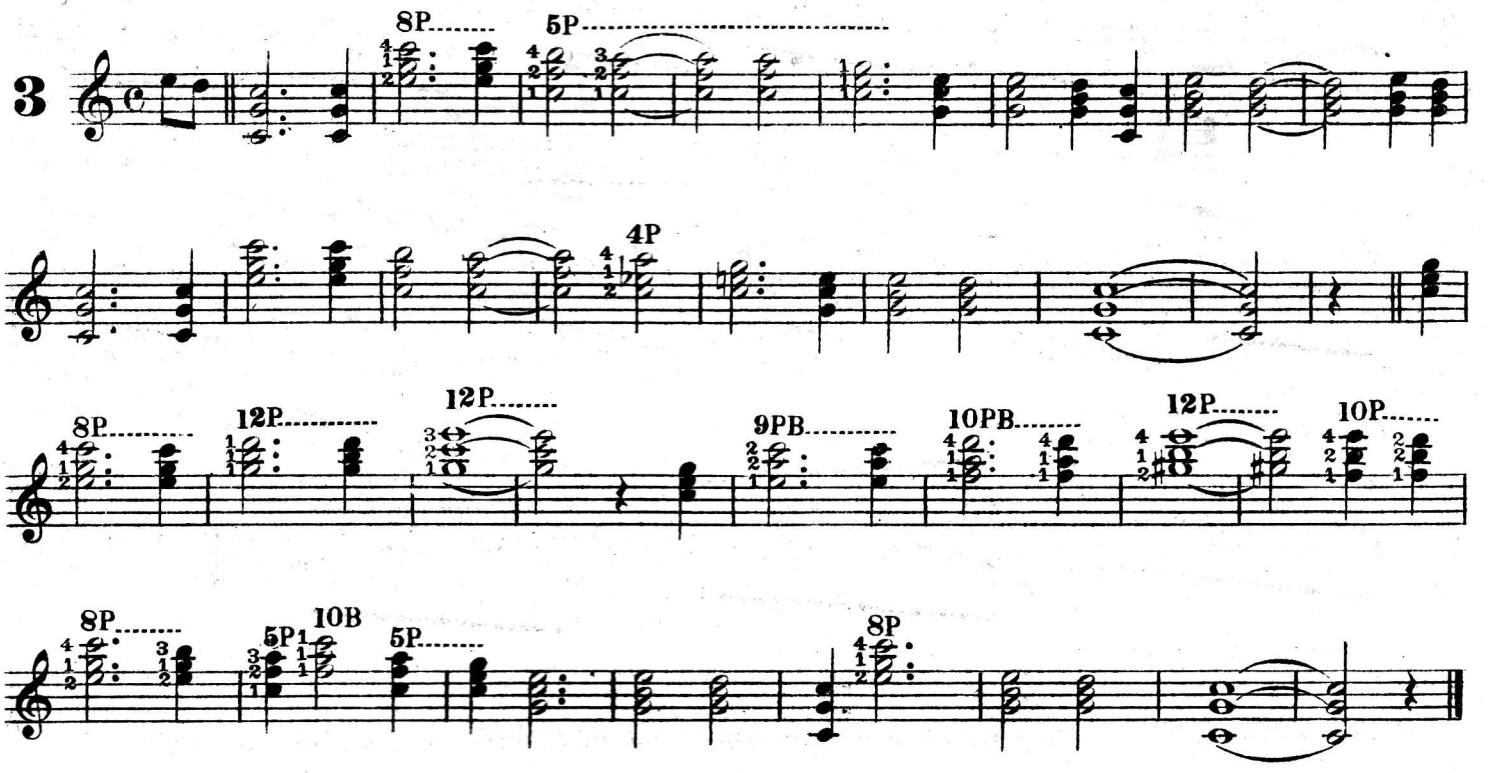
Arr.d by B. Sheldon Green.



Observation:– This Study illustrates the Two-Note Accompaniment.

"ANNIE LAURIE."

Arr.d by B. Sheldon Green.



Observation:– This Study illustrates Chord-Sostenuto.

MISERÉRE.

(IL TROVATORE.)

ABRIDGED

VERDI.
Arr.d by B. Sheldon Green.

This Study illustrates:- *(a)* Sustaining the 1st & 2nd Strings while picking two with the thumb.
(b) The Two-Note accompaniment style.

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